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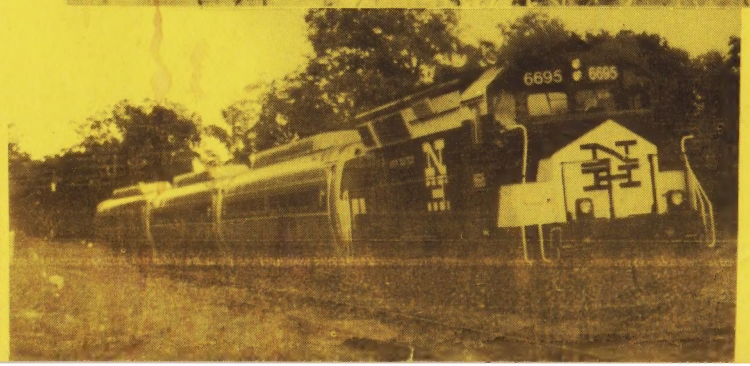

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS (ISSN 0896—4440) is published semimonthly (twice a month) by Message Media, 1611 #2-A San Pablo Ave, Berkeley CA 94702. **(DO NOT SEND MAIL TO THIS ADDRESS, WHICH IS GIVEN ONLY TO FULFILL POSTAL REQUIREMENTS.)** Periodicals Class postage paid at Berkeley CA (USPS 006—012).

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Vol. 25, no. 19. Whole no. 557. Oct 31, 1996. Copyright © 1996 by Message Media. Address all mail to Message Media, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription rate $26 per year to US & possessions. To other countries $35 per year. Single copy $1.25. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Editors-at-Large: Glenn Lee & Paul Rayton. Regional Correspondents: Peter Bretz, Jack Ferry, Adron Hall, Kenneth Maylath, Peter Roehm. RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.50/line of 80 spaces. Display ads $1.50/square inch.

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EAST COAST REPORT

Effective with the next Amtrak timetable change, the THREE RIVERS will be extended west from Pittsburgh to Chicago over CSX lines. This will be the sameroute as the BROADWAY LIMITED, which was discontinued last year. The termination of the BROADWAY LIMITED proved to be a miscalculated decision, as the cross-platform transfer between the THREE RIVERS and the CAPITOL LIMITED during the wee hours generated many complaints, and the switching out of mail-handling cars caused frequent delays to both trains. Seen here is the THREE RIVERS passing through Union Furnace PA westbound en route to Pittsburgh on Conrail's former Pennsylvania RR main line on a clear afternoon, on July 20. Photo and text by Alex Mayes.

Metro-North's New Haven line timetable dated Oct 27-Apr 5 was available in the rack at New Haven Oct 22. It features an 8:40am off-peak train New Haven-NY stopping only at Milford and Stratford, then express to 125th and Grand Central. This train runs Dec 26, 27, 30 & 31 only. I guess you could call it the "Exchange Gifts Limited". Two similar trains originating in Fairfield leave there at 10:19 and 11:19. On Nov 27 only, a 2:02pm train will depart Grand Central, making only five stops en route to New Haven. Note that there is a regular 2:07pm right behind this train. The existing 3:02pm Fri-only train will also run Nov 27. Also on Nov 27 there is a 3:09 which runs nonstop to New Canaan branch stations only. There is also a 3:54pm on Nov 27 only which makes stops Stamford through S. Norwalk. This is also an off-peak train.

On Saturdays only Nov 2 through Jan 4 there are shoppers' specials departing New Haven at 7:47 and 10:47, making only five stops to Grand Central. In addition there are three trains making stops Greenwich through Larchmont, leaving Greenwich at 9:59, 10:59 and 11:59am. In the reverse direction there are shoppers' specials departing Grand Central at 3:10pm local to Stamford, 3:37pm express to Stamford and local to New Haven, plus another set of trains at 4:10 and 4:37pm.

Due to increasing crowds on Sat evening trains to New Haven which lv Grand Central at 7mins past the hour, two new trains have been added which run every Sat and on Presidents' Day, departing at 5:37 and 6:37; thus from 5:07 to 7:07pm Sat, service to New Haven is increased from hourly to half-hourly.

On Sun only a new 5:30am local originates at Stamford for NY. The Sat-only 4:50am train from New Haven now lvs Sat, Sun & holidays at 4:40am.

Finally, on New Year's Eve, special express trains to NY will lv New Haven at 5:47 pm, 6:47 & 7:47. Note that these depart 10mins ahead of the regular trains. On New Year's Day only, there will be a 12:45am train from New Haven to NY and also a 2:20am local from Stamford to NY.

More and more people are riding the New Haven line these days, avoiding the "I-95 Nightmare", and with these service improvements and special trains, M-N's patronage can only go up and up. Way to go, M-N!

Metro-North's new Harlem line timetable shows added weekday service to and from Dover Plains. A new peak morning train leaves Dover Plains at 7:06 and connects at Brewster North for an express to NY. In the reverse direction, the 4:17pm from NY now connects to a

shuttle that goes through to Dover Plains. This connection formerly served only Patterson and Pawling. The 6:58pm from NY, formerly terminating at Brewster North with no connection, now sports a connection to Dover Plains. There is now a Sun & holiday train to NY, leving Brewster North at 4:45am. There is a 5:08am on Sat. Also, since not everyone celebrates in NY, there is a New Year's Day-only train leaving Brewster North at 12:45am and a local to NY departing North White Plains at 2:05am.

M-N's Hudson line also sees schedule improvements. The 5:12am weekend train from Poughkeepsie, formerly running Sat only, will now also operate on Sun and holidays. On Nov 27 only (the day before Thanksgiving), there will be a 2:52pm express from NY to Croton-Harmon which will relieve crowding on the regular 2:58 train to Poughkeepsie. Also on that date there will be an express nonstop to Croton, Cortlandt and Peekskill. On Dec 26, 27, 30 & 31 the 9:12 am from Poughkeepsie will skip stops at Ossining, Tarrytown and Yonkers. A separate train originating at Croton 4mins behind this train will cover the skipped stops. On New Year's morning return trains will depart Poughkeepsie at 12:25am, and there will also be a 2am to NY from Croton. Finally, the 6:20am to Croton will have a New Year's Day-only connection to Poughkeepsie.

The Long Island RR reissued all its timetables effective Oct 21. Many lines feature special holiday trains.

A six-month experiment began Oct 27 on PATH, which for the first time in many years features direct service between Hoboken and the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan. Weekend service between those points formerly was slow, involving a change of trains at Grove Street in Jersey City.

NJ Transit on Oct 26 ran special trains to and from Far Hills on the Gladstone Branch for those attending the Far Hills Steeplechase races. It appears that trains departing Gladstone at 8:02am and hourly through 1:02pm actually originated at Bernardsville and made their regular runs to Hoboken. A note advised that buses operate continuously from Gladstone to Peapack and Far Hills between 8am and 1pm. The 2:02 pm from Gladstone was scheduled to make its normal trip. The next train was moved up to a 2:40pm departure, with the 4:02pm replaced by a bus with the train originating in Far Hills at 4:08pm. Passenger extras then departed Far Hills at 4:30, 4:35 and 5pm. The next train was a regular train that departed Gladstone at 5:02. Then there were more extras originating at Far Hills at 5:30 and 5:35. After the regular 6:02pm from Gladstone there were two more extras leaving Far Hills at 6:30 and 6:35pm.

The outbound from Hoboken at 7:43am with stops at Far Hills, Peapack and Gladstone made as "L" stops, means the train can leave ahead of the printed time. The 8:43am from Hoboken had "L" stops from Summit all the way to Gladstone. An extra train originated at Summit 7mins behind this train, making all stops to Far Hills. Another extra departed Hoboken at 9:35 am, stopping at Newark Broad St, then express to S. Orange and local to Gladstone. The next train from Hoboken was the regular 9:43 local, but making "L" stops Summit to Gladstone. Another passenger extra originated summit 7mins behind that train to Far Hills. Another extra left Hoboken at 10:35—same as the 9:35. The next train from Hoboken was the regular 10:43 departure to Gladstone with "L" stops from Summit. There was one more extra departing Summit at 11:32am to Far Hills. It's interesting to note that those 9:32, 10:32 and 11:32 departures from Summit made connections with trains that originated in Penn Station NY. NJ Transit is to be commended for running all this extra service and hopefully many decided to use it rather than drive and clog the local roads for miles around.

On Sat & Sun, Oct 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 & 27 25-car trains powered by C&O steamer #614 were run from Hoboken to Port Jervis with the engine turned on the restored turntable at Port Jervis (bulldozer powered!). Cars were a mix of commuter and private cars. All trips were sold out, with over 6000 tickets sold. I rode the Oct 12 run and it was great. Port Jervis has a wide open area where a large freight yard was located, and many runbys were performed there—three on the 12th and four on the 26th. —Bob Underwood.

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The Night Owl, trains 66 & 67, although not known by name anymore, will continue to run on their overnight Boston-Washington route, despite persistent rumors that they were to be discontinued with the Nov 10 timetable change.

FTA Administrator Gordon Linton on Oct 30 participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for Washington DC's Reisterstown Road Station daycare center and police substation at the Reisterstown Road Plaza Metro Subway Station. The daycare center and Baltimore city police substation at the state Mass Transit Administration's Metro station is an FTA Livable Communities Initiative demonstration project. In May, 1995 FTA awarded $1.52 million to the MTA to help built the 9600-square foot daycare center and a 650-square foot Baltimore police substation attached to it. The $1.9 million project, to which the City of Baltimore contributed $400,000, also will provide a landscaped playground area and a covered walkway leading to a dropoff area and parking lot. The facilities will open by next summer. Linton said the project is unique in that it will decrease parking spaces while increasing ridership and providing needed community services. The daycare center is to encourage commuting parents to combine daycare trips with travel to work via transit. The police facility will provide an area for on-duty city police officers participating in the city's community policing program and also will be a crime deterrent at the Metro location. Also at the ceremony were US Sen. Paul Sarbanes, US Reps Banjamin Cardin and Elijah Cummings, state deputy transportation sec'y Tom Osborne and MTA officials and community leaders.

A Chester PA multimodal transit station also had its groundbreaking Oct 28, with FTA head Gordon Linton in attendance, along with US Rep Thomas Foglietta. The Chester Transportation Center serves a commuter rail line and eight suburban bus routes with a combined ridership of 4500. This is also a Livable Communities demo project. At the end of 1994, the FTA awarded $6 million to SEPTA to work with Chester to plan and build community services within a rehabbed center. The center will also improve pedestrian and bus access the enhance safety, at a total cost of $7.5 million. A proposal has also been submitted for funding to develop a small-business incubator program in the center.

The NE timetable for Nov 10 shows changes that include the following: Metroliners 101, 103, 108, 120 & 124 will not serve New Carrollton. Metroliners 104, 105, 107, 108, 111, 116, 120 & 124 will gain a stop at BWI. Trains 85 & 86 will run via Springfield MA instead of the Shore Line via Providence RI. NY-Harrisburg gets another round trip on weekdays. NY-Albany gets another round trip, replacing local service on the **Lake Shore Ltd**. Custom Class service is offered on all Empire Service trains except 62, 63, 68, 69 & 70. Departure times are switched for trains 48 and 284 at Buffalo NY.

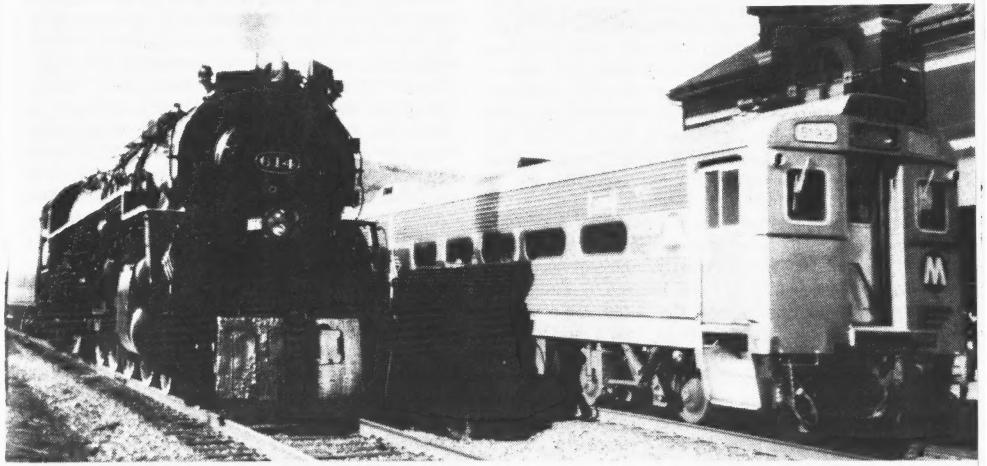
High Iron Enterprises on Oct 12 ran the first of its six regularly-scheduled steam excursions over NJ Transit and Conrail from Hoboken NJ to Port Jervis NY. At 3pm the 27-car train, pulled by 4-8-4 steamer no. 614, prepared to leave Port Jervis, 91 miles from Hoboken and the longest distance traveled by NJ Transit commuter trains. In the past, Port Jervis was an important stop on the Erie Railroad main line.

In the accompanying photo, taken at Port Jervis Oct 12, the High Iron Enterprises special train pulled by locomotive 614, which is owned by Ross Rowland, meets the regular Metro-North passenger train consisting of push-pull equipment. Passenger service on the Port Jervis line is provided jointly by NJ Transit and Metro-North Commuter Railroad. —Bruce J. Russell.

The Ethan Allen, the new New York to Rutland VT train funded by the state of Vermont will begin operation with the first train leaving NY Dec 2 and the first Rutland-NY train operating Dec 3. Mon-Sat train 291 lvs NYC at 3:50pm and reaches Rutland at 9:07pm. On Sun, train 293 lvs NYC at 5:40pm and reaches Rutland at 10:52pm. Southbound there are three different schedules for different days. On Mon-Fri train 294 lvs Rutland 1:20pm and arrives NYC 6:42pm while on Sat train 290 lvs Rutland 7:05am and reaches NYC 12:10pm, and on Sun train 292 lvs NYC 2:55pm and arrives Rutland 8:10pm. The train offers Custom Class service. Station stops are Rutland, Fort Edward, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, Albany-Rensselaer, Hudson, Rhinecliff, Poughkeepsie, Croton-Harmon, Yonkers and NY (Penn Station). The train is expected to be equipped with Amfleet cars.

The station at Rutland VT (code RUD) is at Rutland Plaza Shopping Mall, Merchants Row, ZIP Code 05701. The station stop is near the parking deck. It is an "advance purchase" station—i.e., unstaffed. There is no baggage checking or ticketing there.

Test trains for qualifying crews reportedly ran beginning the weekend of Nov 2 between Albany-Rensselaer and Rutland. [On Oct 19 an FRA special was run, with FL9 #485 on the



north end and DM32 #701 on the south. The Vermont Railway took exception to the presence of a five-axle unit, so all future trips must be run with F40s. On Oct 23, F40 #206 took a café car and Amtrak car "Corridor Clipper" up to Rutland and back. The train was able to operate in push mode returning due to the "Corridor Clipper" having a control cab.—Craig O'Connell]

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The SEPTA board voted in late Oct to implement many of the service cuts it earlier had rejected due to commuter and publlic objections. Included in the cuts, and over the objections of the board's two Chester County reps, are three Philadelphia-Parkesburg round trips of Regional Rail line R5.

The Delaware Valley ARP did not oppose the Parkesburg cuts, which would move the west end of the R5 line back to Downingtown. Coatesville and Parkesburg would still have Amtrak service. Amtrak will reportedly add one NY to Harrisburg round trip with the Nov 10 change.

On a brighter note, SEPTA and the Delaware RR Administration and Delaware DOT reached an agreement to continue Philadelphia to Wilmington service until Jun 1999. The agreement, said SEPTA in an announcement, paves the way for an extension to Newark DE.

NJ Transit has been performing track work on the Atlantic City line between Frankford Junction in Philadelphia and Pennsauken NJ. Ties are being replaced and the Delair lift bridge is being redecked. The work is being performed Mon through Fri, and buses are replacing trains between Philadelphia and Cherry Hill. Buses lv 30th St Station in Philadelphia for Cherry Hill at the same times that trains are scheduled to depart Philadelphia. No travel time is being lost on the route.

At a meeting Oct 21 at Rowan College in Glassboro NJ, NJDOT commissioner Frank Wilson and NJT rep Frank Russo' tried to address Gloucester County residents opposed to rail transit development. Both officials were shouted down by rail opponents, who gathered near a microphone set up for members of the audience to address the meeting. The rail opponents also heckled anyone who spoke in favor of the rail line, making remarks about noise, crime, sliding property values and children being struck by trains.

Anti-rail activists did not come only from Gloucester County: a Janis Lavender of Atco, Camden County, said she couldn't sell her house and her community had become a dangerous place to live because of the Atlantic City Line, which passes through (and has a station for) Atco. Lavender also complained that discounted NJT fares, meant for a trial period of several months, are now in effect after seven years. (This is also due to a moratorium on NJT fare hikes that lasts until 1998.) Several residents of Gloucester City, in Camden County, also registered strong opposition. Gloucester City is just south of the city of Camden, which supports the rail line.

North of Camden, Pennsauken and several Burlington County towns have either come out against the rail line or withdrawn earlier support. Officials cite lack of precise information from NJ Transit on safety, operating aspects and effects on traffic and parking for withholding support. Yet other communities still favor rail development, holding back a meltdown of support for rail service like that seen in Gloucester County.

Transit development matters could be complicated by the planned sale of six of seven lines operated by Conrail in south Jersey, including lines in Burlington and Gloucester Counties. Three short lines are reportedly bidding on the lines as a package deal, which includes most of the rail yard in Camden. One line to Salem County would remain part of Conrail, as it carries much coal, coke and chemical traffic.

NJ Transit would have to negotiated with the new owner rather than Conrail for use of the right of way to build a rail transit line. The line sale, set to close Dec 1, was announced to Conrail workers Oct 1. Two weeks later, a much bigger bomb was dropped on Conrail workers when it and CSX announced plans to merge the two rail systems, creating an Eastern rail giant that could exceed UP-SP in size and revenue. This merger is being challlenged by Norfolk Southern, which lost two previous takeover attempts and is now mounting a hostile takeover as well as challenging the Conrail-CSX deal in court. Some rail workers believe Conrail has accelerated shortline sales to make itself a more attractive merger partner. —James Thorton.

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An MBTA project to extend commuter rail north of Ipswich MA on the Eastern Route, to Newburyport, is on hold because of a dispute regarding possible unethical dealings between a former MBTA official and Middlesex Corp., which entered a low bid for the project a year ago. Those affected by the construction delay complain that an entire construction season has been lost by the dispute. They want to begin work by next spring, but to do so the MBTA will have to move rapidly to settle the problem. It is possible that new bids will have to be taken. The rail extension is considered vital to the economy of the region it will touch, and urgent for relieving highway congestion there. —Peter Roehm.

The Washington Metro in late Oct was charged by the NTSB as the culprit in the death of a Metro operator on Jan 6, when the huge blizzard was beginning. The Metro had required operators never to override the automatic computer train controls. This resulted in a train skidding in the snow, and the driver's death. The system has now changed the rule again, so drivers must use manual control in bad weather.

Atlantic Coast Service timetable has been issued for Nov 10 (Fall/Winter 1996/97) which lists the three **Silver** trains: **Palm, Star,** and **Meteor**, plus the **Carolinian** and **Piedmont**. An immediate criticism of the folder was that it makes no mention of connections at Sanford FL for the **Sunset Limited**. Notes Joseph Oates, "The **Auto Train** terminal is several hundred yards from the Amtrak depot, and there is no easy way except by car."

Heavy storms were affecting transportation and most other aspects of living, in upper NY State. Nov 9 & 10 saw torrential rains, and eight counties were declared disaster areas. The same weekend the Midwest received extra-early snows, and in fact heavier ones than anyone remembered. Parts of Ohio reported two feet of snow on the ground.

Baltimore's Penn Station is reducing the rates at its parking garage after a year of complaints and low patronage. The daily rate is dropping from $12 to $8.

Amtrak will keep its NE Corridor Business Unit headquarters at Philadelphia 30th St Station after actions by state and city officials to preserve the 350 jobs there. The state is providing $1 million for office upgrading and PennDOT is giving $200,000 for improvements to platforms and other station areas.

SEPTA is looking hard for a general manager to replace Louis Gambaccini next Feb 1. Possible names mentioned include Thomas J. Know, a millionaire businessman who is close to Mayor Rendell, and Paul Skoutelas, head of Orlando FL]s transit agency, Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority.

LATE NEWS BRIEFS: The NTSB decided in late Oct that the fault for the Metra commuter train/school bus collision in Fox River Grove IL on Oct 25, 1995 was that of the state DOT for allowing a faulty traffic signal at the street crossing, and also that of the school district for not training the substitute bus driver about her route.....**Thruway bus service** connecting the Illinois cities of Galesburg, Peoria, Bloomington and Champaign ended Oct 10 because the bus operator terminated its service on that route....

Popular Mechanics Magazine's current issue carries an attractive article on the Boston to Washington high-speed rail project.....

The Metro Commission of Dade County FL in Oct decided to stop funding its part of the Tri-Rail commuter service. It's not known yet what effect this will have on the service.....

Kansas City Area voters approved funding to convert Union Station into a science museum. Amtrak will probably not move in, however.....

The Marlboro Unlimited train, under construction in Denver, will not run until 1998 due to construction delays. Sweepstakes winners who expected to ride in 1997 will be offered an optional cash payment of $6000.....

The Teamsters Union in Pennsylvania said it will fight any merger of Conrail because it would eliminate over 100,000 trucking jobs.....

RAIL CANADA

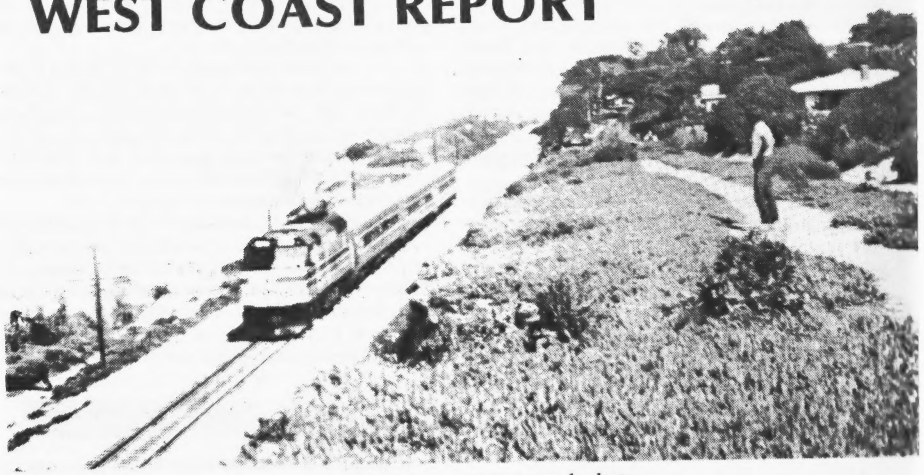
It's unusual to see two passenger train operators in a dispute over use of the same route, but in the case of VIA Rail and the Great Canadian Railtour Company, a definite conflict is reported by a Vancouver BC newspaper. The route in question is Vancouver to Jasper. Next summer VIA plans to double train capacity. VIA head Terry Ivany told reporters "Ordinary citizens can't get on the train because all the space is taken up by tourists and tour operators. ...We are not satisfying demand in June, July and August. That's the only reason we are considering increased frequency." But a spokesman for GCRC, operators of the **Rocky Mountaineer**, said "We believe that a private company that's grown to the point where it's paying taxes should not have to compete directly with a Crown Corporation that's subsidized by about $300 million a year. We believe we have built the market to the point where it can support further capacity. VIA says it will add 50,000 seats on the... route after we announced we would put on a second train. We don't think that's fair." Reportedly the matter is being taken up by Transport Minister David Anderson. VIA schedules for next summer on the route appeared in RTN 555.

VIA is running a contest among employees to find a new name for its reservation system. The prize is a first-class trip for two on VIA. The Reservia system will be replaced next spring. VIA has chosen Advantis Canada to develop and operate the new Windows-based, user friendly system.

"Great Railway Journeys III" will be seen on PBS between Oct 31 and Dec 5. One of the episodes, "Halifax to Porteau Cove (BC) with Chris Bo· ·ngton", was filmed almost entirely on board VIA trains in summer 1995, VIA said.

VIA Rail ridership systemwide was up 4% in Sep, over Sep 1995. For the year to date, Jan-Sep, it was up 2%. These figures were, however, below projections by 6.7% and 4.9%.

WEST COAST REPORT



Southbound SAN DIEGAN. Amtrak photo.

Seattle-area rail advocates were delighted by the election-day passage by a substantial 58% pro vote of Seattle's "Sound Move" transit plan. The 10-year plan includes light rail, commuter rail, HOV expressway and regional express bus service. It was detailed here last issue.

Some Amtrak agents on the **California Zephyr** route now display counter signs announcing "Sleeping Car Space Available on Today's Train" if such space is available at their station.

California Zephyr trains have been running much closer to schedule in 1996 than in previous years, say lineside observers. Big schedule padding helps. For example, in late Oct an eastbound **Desert Wind** 54mins late at Milford UT arrived on time at 3:15am at Salt Lake City, and after a 75-min station stop left Salt Lake at 4:30am, on time. That train, due at Grand Jct CO at 10:55am, arrived at 10:31, resulting in a 34-min station stop, although scheduled for a 10-min stop before an 11:05am departure. CZ trains have been running regularly with 3-sleeper, 3-coach consists.

BART Board Director Dan Richard in a Nov 6 San Francisco Chronicle op-ed piece sought to clear up a "misconception that continues to be put forth by a small contingent of opponents from southern San Mateo County that the BART extension to the airport spells doom for CalTrain—or BART versus CalTrain." Said the director, "This is nonsense! BART and CalTrain will complement each other. In fact, through the planned cross-platform connection with CalTrain at Millbrae, BART is projected to bring about 8000 new riders a day to CalTrain."

He also denied that the two are competing for federal funding on this project: "BART and CalTrain are not competing for the same federal funding, period." He explained that FTA funding for BART would come from a program for "new rail starts", while a CalTrain upgrading would come under a "Rail Modernization" program with a separate funding section. If the BART funding were denied, the money would go to another part of the US, not to CalTrain, he said.

The FTA has now certified BART's project as complete and meeting federal requirements, and it appears to be on a high road toward approval. The issues of CalTrain upgrading, electrification and downtown SF station construction are further into the future and seem now to be involved with the question of an L.A.-Bay Area high-speed train into San Francisco.

Dan McNamara of the Train Riders Association of Calif. said "There's more involved with the airport's Airport Light Rail System (ALRS) decision than just connecting to BART and CalTrain. [The SF Airport plans to build a light rail line connecting the domestic and international terminals.] The California High Speed Rail Commission has determined that building their high speed line within the CalTrain right-of-way into San Francisco is the most attractive option. This decision presents a tremendous opportunity for SFO."

Airport officials recognize that the north-south high-speed rail line would help airport problems by reducing the need for domestic flights so the facility can concentrate on more profitable long-distance flights. And the ALRS would function to move long-distance fliers readily to the high-speed rail service for shorter-distance travel. But TRAC feels the design of the ALRS must include a transportation complex that incorporates the ALRS, CalTrain, BART and high-speed and Amtrak trains. A San Bruno Avenue ALRS being considered is "completely inadequate", said McNamara. It would force high speed train and CalTrain riders to walk across a huge platform—up to 900 feet wide—to reach the ALRS. Said he, "You can see the hand of BART in this particular bad design. BART wants to create a monopoly on transit access to the airport –at the expense of San Mateo County residents who live on the CalTrain line and would be denied convenient service." McNamara's remarks appeared in the Oct issue of TRAC's newspaper.

New Grover Beach station on the **Central Coast San Diegan** route was dedicated Nov 2. A VIP train trip was made from Grover Beach to San Luis Obispo, and the equipment was on display at the new station. It featured California engine 2003, Amtrak F40 250, a Horizonliner coach & dinette, an Amfleet Custom Class coach, a Superliner II transition dorm-sleeper, a California diner and a Calif. cab control coach. See also items on p. 10. Revenue service to the Spanish-style station began Nov 4.

California Western Railroad, the Fort Bragg to Willits "Skunk Train", has been purchased by a group of local investors. However, the city manager of Fort Bragg has come under fire for personally buying a 6.4% interest in the line. It appears likely that he will reduce that to no more than 3% to meet legal guidelines. The city manager, Gary Milliman, had organized the investors to take the famous line out of the hands of absentee owners. He called it vital to the area's economy.

Golden Gate Transit awarded a contract Nov 8 for a new $7.5 million catamaran for its San Francisco-Larkspur service. The vessel will cruise at 35 knots, compared to 20.5 knots for its other Larkspur ships. It will allow a 62% increase in commuter space for the runs, and will go into service in early 1998. The feds will pay 46% of the construction costs.

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Metrolink now accepts Discover cards in its ticket vending machines. New phone ports are to speed up credit/ATM card processing. During the next few months, multiple ticket sales of the same fare type will be added to machines.

Construction was underway Oct 11-14 to make the cutover for a new UP-BNSF-SCRRA junction for West Riverside. A third track was expected to be in operation after mid-Oct between West Riverside and Highgrove. A new alignment of the UP and SCRRA was made with Santa Fe.

Double track and new platform construction at Anaheim Stadium, Serra/San Juan Creek siding and double track between 17th St and the Santa Ana station should be finished early next year. New tie, ballast and drainage work between Burbank Jct and Moorpark should be underway by mid-summer, to allow additional operations up to 79mph. Funds are being sought to rebuild the Chatsworth tunnel; the speed there is down to 15mph now and it's becoming a serious operations issue.

New stations continue to be postponed. Downtown Pomona is not expected now until the end of 1997 or in early 1998, pending track redesign because of the SP-UP merger; however, the pedestrian overpass is under construction over the existing main lines. Foothill Transit is now using the new bus-loading bays in front of the former SP passenger station. No use has been found yet for the station building. Montebello could open in late summer of 1997, since UP double-track work near Vail Avenue is being completed. The Fontana Race Track temporary platform will be ready for the first race on June 22. Special trains are expected to operate on all Metrolink routes direct to the race track platform. San Clemente is trying to get a new platform for the 1997 Beach Trains. Burbank and Glendale stations will be rebuilt during 1997.

Several cities are proposing stops, including Sun Valley, Newhall, Yorba Linda, Buena Park, Tustin and Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo. All are 1-3 years away, pending design and funding. —Ed Von Nordeck.

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The new Governor of Washington is Gary Locke. In his victory speech he placed transportation as one of the three priorities of his administration. But the new head of the state senate transportation commission will probably be a trucking company owner from Eastern Washington who has expressed dislike for rail programs.

The outcome of an Oregon election initiative to fund a north-south light rail line from Portland and to provide funds for capital improvements in the Pacific NW Corridor is not known as we go to press. There were many absentee ballots remaining to be counted.

The longest-riding CalTrain commuter? CalTrain on Oct 25 presented a "State of the Train Report", the first such for them. In it they recognized 85-year-old David Meblin of Palo Alto for his 48 years of commuting on the line—he uses the 7:59am train to San Francisco, where he still works, running a TV news features syndication company. Meblin told the SF Chronicle, "I've been a supporter of public transportation. I believe the world would be better off if nobody invented the internal combustion engine." He added, "When I ride a train, I feel like I'm in a cocoon. I feel safe. I know I'll get there on time. It's a very comfortable routine."

Caltrans said that it is issuing route folders for all three state-supported Amtrak lines and a statewide timetable dated Nov 10, but that the latter would be available a week or two late.

Capitol route: Only minor intermediate time changes on weekdays, and end point times are unchanged; but for weekend trains, some major changes. Train 731 is replaced by daily operation of train 723, with a 45-min later schedule than 731 had. To avoid bunching the schedule,

733 runs 15mins later (lv Sacramento 8:45am). The two eastbd evening trains each run an hour later and have new numbers. No. 736 lvs Oakland at 6:20pm, ar Roseville 9:20. No.738 lvs San Jose 6:35pm and ar Sacramento 10:05.

San Joaquins: Biggest change: nos. 713, 714, 715 & 716 now lv from Oakland rather than Emeryville. Thus all **SJ** trains operate to or from Oakland as of Nov 10. Some minor intermediate time changes, especially Fresno-Bakersfield, as BNSF completes more trackwork. No. 717 runs about 5mins earlier (lv Bakrsfld 3:55pm); with some minor **San Diegan** changes, this allows 717's L.A. bus to connect with the next later **San Diegan**. Southbd, #714 is about 20mins earlier, and its L.A. bus connects with the next earlier **San Diegan**, permitting a San Diego arrival over 2hrs earlier. No. 716 runs 5-10mins later.

San Diegans: Major changes: Northbd, weekday #771 becomes #571, running only as far as L.A. It schedule is 15mins earlier. No. 571 on weekdays & #769 weekends will carry through coaches for the **Coast Starlight**. These cars will run through San Diego-Seattle. Weekday #773 replaces #573. It lvs San Diego 17mins earlier, stops only at Solana Beach, Oceanside, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Ana and Fullerton enroute to L.A., ar 9:38am. It then continues to Santa Barbara, making the same stops as weekend #769. **Central Coast San Diegan** train 779 adds a stop at the new Grover Beach station. Trains 781 & 791 were consolidated into a daily #781 in Sep. Train 583 was rescheduled to run over an hour later in July. Train 585 runs 45mins later, and Friday-only train 587 is discontinued.

Southbd, #570 runs 25mins earlier. Weekday train 772 is replaced by daily operation of #572 from L.A. only. Conversely, weekday #574 is replaced by daily operation of #774 from Santa Barbara. Train 776 from San Luis Obispo adds a stop at Grover Beach. Daily except Sat Train 584 is replaced by weekday-only train 580 which operates on an express schedule from L.A. to San Diego, lv at 4:13pm. Train 780 is renumbered as 784, lv Santa Barbara almost 3hrs earlier at 4:00pm. Through coaches from the **Coast Starlight,** train 11, will operate to San Diego as train 511—filling the late-evening slot formerly occupied from L.A. by train 786.

New Stop Locations: Grover Beach (GVB) Amtrak station is at 150 Hwy 1. San Clemente stop is temporarily moved to the Metrolink station, 1850 Avenida Estacion, off El Camino Real near Avenida Pico; this stop is one mile north of the former San Clemente Pier stop. New stops at Carpinteria and Goleta are expected to open before the next schedule change.

There are numerous Thruway Bus schedule changes for all the above routes. Yosemite bus has no schedule changes.

Summer Rail Travel in Alaska

By Duane W. Roller

Late summer is often the best time to visit Alaska and to experience its variety of passenger train service. I arrived in Fairbanks at the end of August with the plan of riding most of the state's rail service.

A cold and clear August morning found me at the Fairbanks station, just north of town. A dozen tour buses were waiting as the southbound passenger train was backed into the station. First, from the rear, appeared three Princess cars, then six Westours cars, with the regular train, consisting of two coaches, dome coach, diner, and baggage car, on the head end. A bizarre scene ensued as the tour passengers were lined up according to car assignment, and then marched in formation to their car, led by a tour guide. Regular passengers waited in the station, although those in the know went directly to the head end of the train and boarded. Only after all the tour passengers had loaded—a lengthy process--were the regular passengers also lined up and marched out of the station along the platform to the train.

About 50 passengers boarded the two regular coaches: this late in the season loads are not large. Timekeeping on the Alaska Railroad seems to be casual, and it was several minutes past the 8:30am departure time that we were off, curving around from the depot and heading west across the north side of Fairbanks.

The diner opened immediately and was soon nearly filled. It has been reputed to be the finest dining car in North America, and I was not disappointed. Catered by Marriott, it offers an incredible variety of items, not cheaply, but well cooked and nicely served by a crew of eager young men and women. Breakfast items included eggs with reindeer sausage, French toast, smoked salmon, or a fruit basket, priced at $6.50 to $7.50, beverage extra.

All during breakfast we headed west, past the University of Alaska, and into the brush, on average track for which the top speed was 49 mph. Fall colors were beginning to appear, and the fireweed was at its peak, giving a bright pink quality to the right of way. After breakfast it was into the dome car: the light load meant that seats were never at a premium. The equipment was spotless inside and out, the dome windows crystal clear, and the train was staffed by eager young people who gave a tour spiel, interesting, but essentially that available in the route guide one could purchase in the gift shop under the dome. But one car was a "quiet car" in which no spiel was given.

The day was incredibly clear--a storm had passed through the previous day--and it was hoped the mountains might be visible. Indeed they were: as we approached Nenana the glistening peaks of the Alaska Range appeared to the south, and we curved toward them. We lumbered out of the brush and onto the viaduct crossing the Nenana River, and then made a great S-turn down into the town of Nenana itself. And all the while the mountains grew and grew, dominated by the huge peak of Mount McKinley.

There were no passengers at Nenana today, and we curved back to the south. McKinley always ahead and to the right. As the foothills grew it disappeared behind them, and the countryside, virtually flat since Fairbanks, became more rugged as we approached the Nenana river, our route into the mountains.

A brief stop for a few passengers at Healy, the original first division point south of Fairbanks, and then it was along the scenic Nenana canyon at 15 mph, an area noted for its slides and washouts. The cold waters of the river surged below as the train crawled along the shelf, but, soon the canyon widened and Horseshoe Lake appeared on the left and we had entered Denali National Park, stopping at the station 28 mins late at 12:43pm. Here an almost total transfer of passengers, both tour and regular, took place.

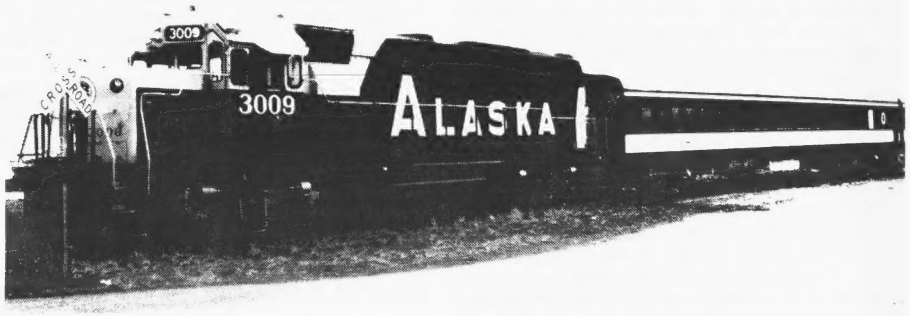
Several days later, on another clear day, I rejoined the train at Denali for the trip south. The train was running about half an hour late, and the same regimentation as at Fairbanks took place, with regular passengers confined to the station porch until the tour passengers had begun loading. The loading is an arduous and lengthy process--tour passengers are loaded car by car--and the station stop can be nearly half an hour. Because of this, the railroad is planning to run the train in two sections next summer, with a tour section running first, perhaps leaving about two hours ahead of the regular section. This will increase capacity, especially for regular passengers, whose portion is limited to three coaches at present. It will also mean the regular train operates more efficiently.

Departure from Denali was 29 late at 12:59pm. The dining car crew uses the stop at Denali as its break, and plays catch on the platform, leaving the car, here in laid-back Alaska, wide open. As soon as we left, it was lunch time, with a choice from such items as seafood chowder, smoked salmon, seafood medley, or reindeer sandwich, for $6.75 to $8.50 plus beverage.

The first part of the trip continued through the mountains and over the low summit into the Sustina watershed. The foothills of the Alaska Range prevent views of McKinley at first, but soon it appeared, behind and to the right, and was more or less visible today all the way to Anchorage. But it is far more common to travel the route and never see the mountains.

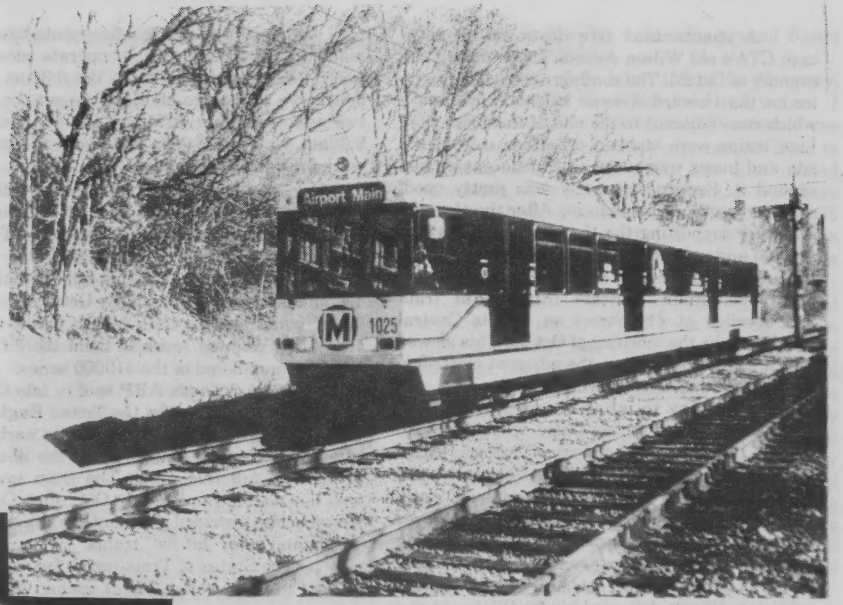
At Broad Pass the northbound, running on time, was met, and the tour guides exchanged trains, this allowing them to spend all nights at home. We passed over Hurricane Creek viaduct, scene of many publicity photographs, and stopped in late afternoon at Talkeetna, and later at Wasilla, both of which had few passengers. The countryside grew more populated as we leisurely approached Anchorage, always outpaced by cars on the adjacent highway.

(continued on page 15)



The Seward train at the Seward depot prepares to leave for Anchorage on a Sep day. Photo by the author.

MIDWEST REPORT



Last February, transit journalist Don Scott (photo above) was out photographing the old L&N/CSX (ex-Seaboard System) right of way on which a new St. Louis MetroLink extension is to be built, running 27 miles into St. Clair county.

Then on Oct 17 DOT Secretary Pena in a ceremony officially granted the light rail line the money to begin the extension. In a ceremony hosted by the St. Clair County (IL) Transit District and attended by hundreds of citizens, officials and transit advocates, Pena, FTA head Gordon Linton and local officials from the Metro East area, St. Clair Co. Transit District and Bi-State Development Agency signed a full funding grant agreement to built the next extension of MetroLink—a 17.4-mile alignment. The signatures symbolized a commitment by Bi-State to build and operate the extension and by the feds to fund its construction with $243.9 million in capital new-start funds.

The local share of $95.2 million will be provided by revenue from a half-cent sales tax approved by voters of the Transit District three years ago. The Transit District will also fund operating costs for the extension while continuing its current financial support of bus service in St. Clair County.

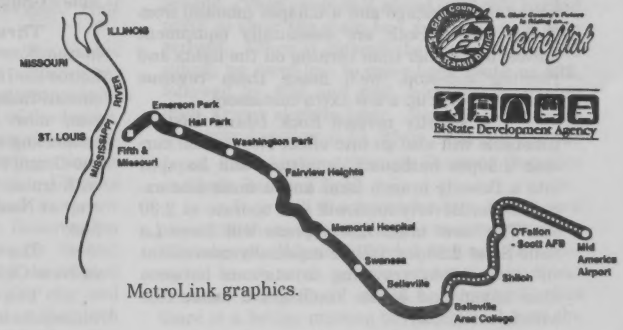
In the ceremony at Belleville Area College Pena told those gathered that they are a model for the country, in showing what can be done when rivalries are dismissed for the common good. He gave officials a check for the first install -ment of the grant, $39.7 million.

In addition, he had a $10 million check for four new light rail vehicles—in addition to six recently ordered—for the Bi-State Development Agency.

Pena remarked that no other light rail system in the US can equal the doubling of projected ridership that MetroLink has seen on its present line, between East St. Louis and Lambert Field.

The new line will serve East St. Louis, Washington Park, Fairview Heights, Swansea and Belleville IL. Later, it is to be extended north and east around Scott AFB to Mid-America Airport, north of Mascoutah. Construction work will begin in about 17 months.

In the elevated-line photos here, MetroLink trains, having crossed the Mississippi River, head for the East St. Louis terminus. By 2001 the system will be extended 17.4 miles east to Belleville IL, and in phase 2, not yet funded, 10 more miles will be added, to Scott AFB/ Mid America Airport. Photos by Don Scott.



MetroLink graphics.

A spectacular fire destroyed the Chicago CTA's old Wilson Avenue shops during the evening of Oct 26. The conflagration halted service on the Howard Avenue L (the "Red Line"), which runs adjacent to the site of the shops. Red Line trains were stubbed on either side of the site and buses were used to shuttle passengers around it. Service reportedly was pretty good, considering the circumstances. After the elevated structure supporting the through tracks was inspected and repaired—there was little damage—CTA service resumed by Oct 29.

Wisconsin Central intermodal train 218 derailed at 41st Street on Illinois Central freight tracks the morning of Oct 22. This slowed Metra Electric service on the adjacent electrified tracks until the wreck was cleared.

Contrary to what is stated on p. 18 of RTN 555, it's not Richie Daley who's likely to become Bill Clinton's Secretary of Transportation in 1997, but his brother William Daley, who is a lawyer in private practice here—and obviously politically well-connected. Clinton passed over William Daley for this same post in 1993, picking Pena instead for political reasons. Daley knows what a railroad is, at least, but he's basically a politician. Illinois delivered big for Clinton in the Nov 5 election, and we're probably in line for some goodies as a result. (New commuter lines, more operating money for the CTA, or just more highway money?)

Chicago transit observers thought a new BN commuter timetable would be issued for the Oct 27 time change (to Standard Time), and Metra was studying service improvements. But the timetable didn't appear, and rumor has it there won't be a new one until 1997.—Mike Blaszak.

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Metra schedule changes for Nov 4 were announced: "SouthWest Service riders get four more trains beginning Nov 4. One is a mid-morning train from Orland Park/179th St at 9:05am arriving Chicago at 10:08am and the other is a later evening train, leaving Chicago at 8:30pm and arriving 179th St at 9:34pm. Two reverse-peak trains have also been added: a 7:45am outbound from Chicago and a 6:54pm inbound from Orland Park. Both are essentially equipment moves, but rather than turning off the lights and running non-stop, we'll make them revenue trains and pick up a few extra customers.

"A slightly revised Rock Island District timetable will also go into effect Nov 4. The current 2:30pm outbound departure will be split into a Beverly branch local and a main line express. The Beverly local will still operate at 2:30 pm. The 'new' main line express will leave La Salle St at 2:55pm. It'll be especially convenient for 'early birds' traveling to stations between Blue Island and Joliet. You'll get a faster ride with fewer stops.

"A few other minor refinements have been made to allow RI trains to operate more precisely. Those who take #408, the 6:32am out of Joliet, are advised to plan ahead—set the alarm two minutes earlier. Effective the 4th, new time: 6:30am. New timetables will be on the trains a week prior to the changes."

Public hearings on the Metra 1997 program and budget were being held Nov 6 and 7.

Amtrak is taking delivery of Road Railer equipment for transporting mail on its trains. The equipment is being built in Lafayette IN, and delivery began in early October, with the "cars" being sent to the Chicago yards. George Danchisen counted seven of them there Oct 27. They are numbered in the 410000 series.

The Arkansas ARP said in late October that "All reservations for the **Texas Eagle** were purged [from Amtrak's computer] in early Aug, after Amtrak management made the ill-advised decision to kill this route. The train inventory was not restored until early Oct, after Congressional action provided a 6-month reprieve for the **Eagle** and other "hit-list" trains.

"The Status of Train report for train 22 of Nov 24 (Sunday before Thanksgiving) shows the following advance reservations as of today, Oct 28: Coach ridership peaks first at Temple TX with 242 coach passengers on board, and again north of Texarkana with 240 coach passengers. Sleeping car passengers peak north of Longview TX with 88 passengers. These numbers represent a totally sold out train, both coach and sleeper, and in fact this number of coach passengers probably represents standee conditions with the three coaches which Amtrak assigns to this train. This strong ridership is typical of Thanksgiving travel on many trains, but it is particularly noteworthy on the **Texas Eagle** this year, given Amtrak's mishandling of the route. The fact that the train has sold out from a point of zero inventory in less than four weeks is an excellent validation of the healthy demand for rail passenger service on this route. Amtrak management would do well to utilize all available equipment to capitalize on this demand, rather than fabricating reasons for retiring otherwise serviceable ex-Santa Fe Hi-level coaches."

Thruway bus changes for the Midwest in the Nov 10 Amtrak timetable: new service Louisville-Indianapolis-Chicago; new service Cincinnati-Indianapolis-Chicago on days trains don't run; new service Cincinnati-Columbus-Toledo connecting to Toledo trains; new service Kalamazoo-Grand Rapids-Northern Michigan connecting with trains 364, 365 & 355 in Kalamazoo; a new stop at Nashville IL on the Carbondale-St Louis bus.

The Gilman IL stop for train 58, the **City of New Orleans**, is discontinued.

The Union Pacific sold the following Midwestern routes to Wisconsin Central in early Nov: North Green Bay WI-Ishpheming MI; Powers MI-Antoine MI; Quinnesec MI-Niagara WI; Cascade MI-Palmer MI.

ALASKA (continued from page 11)

It was time for one last visit to the dining car and to choose between diner items such as salmon steak or halibut, for $12.95 to $14.95, before final arrival at Anchorage at 8:20pm, ten minutes early. Before entering the station the tour cars were cut off; they were unloaded from the left side of the train, while the regular train pulled up and loaded at the station on the right side.

Several days later it was back to the station to take the train to Seward. This is a service which had been discontinued in the 1950's when the Alaska Steamship Company went out of business, but has recently been reinstated. It takes nearly four hours to travel just over 100 miles, but covering highly scenic areas not otherwise visible. The train is timed to allow a day trip to Seward, and connects at Portage with the Whittier shuttle. It departs Anchorage at 6:45am. On this day the Hurricane Gulch local, consisting of a single RDC, was also running, departing at 6:30am, with a handful of passengers, and the Alaska Railroad, with its now familiar tedious boarding practices, would not allow boarding of the Seward train until the RDC had departed. There were only about 40 passengers.

The Seward train consisted of two coaches and what would have been called a grill car in the 1960's. It was a diner with a limited amount of hot food made on a grill, and many cold items. For breakfast one could choose between pancakes, or cold items such as fruit and cereal.

Departure was leisurely at 7:03am, and we crawled through the suburbs of Anchorage and then began the scenic route along Turnagain Arm, named by Captain Cook on one of his more frustrating days. We headed up this scenic fjord to its end, where Portage lies and the junction with the short line through the mountains to Whittier, built during the second world war to allow easier military access to Anchorage. Today it remains the only American example of that common European phenomenon: a service where one drives one's car onto a train to pass through a mountain tunnel where there is no road. Half a dozen trains a day make the trip.

At Portage devastation from the earthquake of 1964 was still apparent everywhere, with dead trees in swamps, and the remnants of the now-abandoned town to the left of the tracks. After Portage we turned south into the mountains and began another highly scenic portion as we crossed the summit to Seward. Glaciers appeared on all sides as we climbed a narrow pass, and then dropped down the Resurrection River (named by Russian explorers on Easter) into Seward. The earthquake had devastated the last three miles of track into the city and ruined the station, so the line ended at the north side of town, near the marina and new ship terminal. Final arrival was at 11:45am, 45 mins late. Buses met the train to take many of the passengers to the day boat trips around Kenai Fjords National Park.

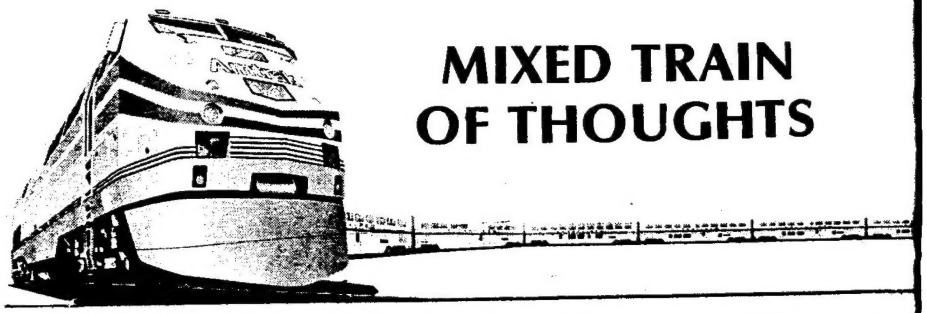
Several days later I was in Skagway, preparing to take the White Pass and Yukon. I had ridden this line before, in 1979, when it was still a common carrier with a passenger train to Whitehorse. But in 1982 the line ceased operations, only to start up again a few years later purely as a tourist line. Only the first 35 miles are still in service, and most trains turn back at White Pass summit, 21 miles from Skagway.

In 1996 WP&Y operated eight round trips a day, six to White Pass and one seven other trains, #31 and #33, had been backed onto Railroad Dock for the two cruise ships, Crown Princess and Sun Princess, that were in town that day. Train 33 had the railroad's only operating steam locomotive. Train 31 headed out at 8:30am, joining the main line at Skagway Junction, just beyond the depot. No. 33 followed ten minutes after, dropping the steam locomotive in the yards and picking up diesels. Meanwhile the last train of the morning parade, #35, left the depot at 8:50am, passed Skagway Junction a few minutes later, and all four were on their way.

Since 1979 the WP&Y has refitted its cars and unfortunately eliminated the parlor car seats and replaced them with rather uncomfortable bench seats, doubling the number of people in each car. A PA system has been added, and although the spiel is not uninteresting, it is incessant, and there is no "quiet car".

But the trip remains as spectacular as ever: up the canyon, past Glacier, and climbing high along the cliffs. We could see #21 high above on its way to Fraser. The old frame bridges still stand, and the remnants of the trail of 1898 are ever visible. After slightly more than an hour we reached White Pass Summit and pulled into Canada. There is no detraining here, but an elaborate dance occurs as the trains reverse. No. 21 is out of the picture at Fraser. Our train, #31, pulled into the side track and ran its engines around, and then back north past the siding, as #33 arrived from the south. As soon as we were clear of the siding, #33 ran its engines around. Then we pulled ahead, and #33 backed north to clear the main line for #35, which soon arrived. When it cleared the south end of the siding, we were free to move back south as #32, followed by #34 and #36, with #22 returning from Fraser slightly later. We arrived back in Skagway Junction at 11 :25am, first going to the depot, then backing through Skagway Junction and onto Railroad Dock.

It is still a spectacular trip, but it is a pity that there are no plans to restore service to Whitehorse. When I asked, I was told "it takes eight hours, and no one wants to do that." Perhaps the railroad would be surprised. But there is a bridge missing beyond MP 67, and the track is otherwise in poor shape.



MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

The train illustration above is from a current Amtrak print ad. The particular ad we saw was from an Eastern paper on the **Lake Shore Ltd** route, and it announced "new Viewliner sleeping-car service to Chicago." Obviously, however, the picture shows Superliners rather than Viewliners. Besides these print ads, Amtrak has a spiffy new TV commercial we've seen, featuring interior and exterior train views.

Now's the time to tell newly re-elected President Clinton about Amtrak's needs for the next fiscal year, FY 1998 (which starts next fall). On this subject NARP said "We're hopeful about the administration's position on letting states use flexible ISTEA funds on passenger rail projects, but the administration has yet to endorse the far more important issue of adequate federal capital investment, especially the half cent; or to clarify its position on Amtrak's $245 million operating grant request. If the President does not support Amtrak on these things, the Republican Congress is not likely to do any better."

Some of the foxes are being put in charge of the chickens in the new Congress, which makes it more important than ever that the administration get its Amtrak funding request correct from the start. NARP reported that the likely new Senate Commerce Committee chairman will be John McCain of Arizona. He would have jurisdiction over Amtrak, but he's the one who sponsored the terrible Amtrak funding-cut amendment that fortunately was defeated by the full Senate 82-17 last July. (Said NARP, "His record on Amtrak makes Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, the current subcommittee chairman, more important to Amtrak.")

On the Senate Appropriations Committee, Ted Stevens of Alaska will become chairman. (NARP: "There's no Amtrak service in Alaska, of course, but Stevens is interested in passenger rail issues as they affect the Alaska Railroad.") The chairman of the subcommittee there possibly will be Richard Shelby of Alabama; NARP noted that he was one of the 17 Senators who voted for the McCain amendment.

NARP again: "In the House, there is little change on the authorizing Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. On Appropriations, Bob Livingston of Louisiana is likely to remain chairman, and the odds seem to favor Frank Wolf of Virginia remaining as Transportation subcommittee chair. With Senator Hatfield out of the appropriations process, these two could be even tougher to deal with than they were this year."

To write the President, address President Bill Clinton, The White House, Washington DC 20500. To contact his staff by phone, call 202-456-1111. It's important that your input be given very soon, before 1998 budgeting is finished. NARP suggested that advocates include in their communications expressions of concern that falling operating grants are forcing cuts to an already skeletal system.

DOT Secretary Peña is indeed leaving his post, as forecast in RTN 555 (see also p.14 of this issue for item on William Daley as replacement). This was publicly verified just after the election. And in fact NARP reported Nov 1 that he will leave for the private sector no matter who won the election, and that the Washington Post said Oct 31 that the leading candidate for his office is Federal Highway Administrator Rodney E. Slater, who once was Clinton's highway chief in Arkansas.

The Coast Starlight that reached Seattle Oct 3 was about 2hrs late because it had hit a herd of cattle in the Oregon Cascades, the emergency braking causing one or more flat wheels on a car. The train had to run at reduced speed to Portland, where the affected car was removed. The train had engines 804 & 237.

RTN has learned that Amtrak believes the **Sunset Limited** will be "gone in the next year or two unless something changes." At a meeting with Amtrak Intercity officials in Chicago Aug 30, NARP President Jack Martin discussed this matter, among many others, and he evidently received less than satisfactory responses from Amtrak: "There are no positive changes on the horizon" he wrote later to Intercity head Mark Cane. "The truncation of that train to Sanford makes little sense in the absence of additional information. I woud like to have seen the savings vs. the projected loss of revenue. I requested that—a vague response followed. No specifics were provided. How much should I have pushed? By then the reluctance to share information was painfully apparent."

Union Pacific officials have been reviewing SP (ex-Rio Grande) trackage with maintenance forces in Western Colorado. Insiders say that UP brass have been unable to give meaningful direction on future track maintenance expenses on the Tennessee Pass route, between Dotsero and Canon city. In approving the UP-SP merger, the National Surface Transportation Board refused UP permission to abandon the route, and speculation is increasing that UP may retain the line for lighter through trains. Passenger advocates point out that the Tennessee Pass line is a potential Amtrak route linking Texas to Northern California and the Pacific Northwest. Rail was replaced on curves in selected areas on the pass this summer. Rio Grande's domeliner **Royal Gorge** used the line until 1967.

A landmark, of sorts, for **California Zephyr** passengers disappeared Nov 5 when Howard Hughes' old ship "Glomar Explorer" moved into drydock to be converted into a deep-sea oil drilling vessel. The mysterious ship, built secretly for the CIA to recover a sunken Russian submarine over 20 years ago, had been anchored for over a decade near the Martinez-Benicia CA railroad bridge that the **CZ** (as well as **Starlight** and **Capitol** trains) cross on each trip. The ship was regularly pointed out to passengers as part of trip travelogues.

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Federal RR Administration has published a guide for intercity rail projects, designed to assist local and state planning agencies in their transportation decision making and to encourage them to consider rail projects as cost-effective allocations of transportation resources. Included in the guide is information on a new computer model designed to assist states and localities in analyzing the economic and financial benefits of public-sector investment in rail and rail-related projects. The guide was initiated by FRA head Jolene Molitoris as a response to President Clinton's executive order on federal infrastructure investment and DOT Sec'y Pena's financing initiative, the Partnership for Transportation Investment program. To obtain the guide, call the FRA Office of Policy at 202-632-3131 or write: Rail Project Reference Guide, FRA, Office of Policy and Program Devel't, 400 Seventh St SW, Washington DC 20590.

The Channel Tunnel operators, Eurotunnel, have been running into financial problems and have had to sign over half of their company to their bankers. However, the tunnel is highly successful, and ridership is higher than projected. An explanation for this situation and a defense of the tunnel was provided by the Providence (RI) Journal-Bulletin in Oct: "The Eurotunnel crisis offers a prime example of a basically good project whose financing arrangements were based on unrealistic expectations. The tunnel opened a year late and cost much more than projected. That is not unusual for a massive and unusual public work, but it sure threw a monkey wrench into the financing. Furthermore, Eurostar—the bullet train that streaks through the tunnel... had become snared in a fare war with airlines and had to lower ticket prices.

"The celebrated Eurotunnel went into default more than a year ago on debts that have risen to $13.5 billion. (Despite good traffic during the summer, revenues covered only a third of the $3-million-a-day interest due on its borrowing.) In exchange for 45.5% of the company, six banks have agreed to write off $1.55 billion of the Chan -nel Tunnel's debt."

In spite of this, the paper calls the tunnel "one of the century's marvels" and "already a fixture in Europe." The editorial writer hopes that in future decades the fiscal problem will become "but a footnote in the project's history".

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First transcon train through Chicago, as long ago urged by RTN: the **Capitol Limited** and the **Southwest Chief** starting in January will become one train—no. 15 westbd and no. 16 eastbd—on approximately the same schedule as now. Already the same equipment goes through Chicago, but the trains have not been formally combined. Amtrak has reportedly laid off some coach cleaners in Chicago as part of what is basically an economy move (though RTN urged it as a convenience to passengers), the coach attendants now clean the train before departure in each direction. As of Nov 6 the new trains numbers were not yet listed in Amtrak's Arrow computer, but they are in the new Nov 10 timetable.

More details of the Oct 22 Newark NJ bomb threat mentioned last issue, p. 4: the date was actually Oct 21. The bomb threat was to train 627. The train stopped at Newark and passengers transferred to NJ Transit trains or to a later Clocker train. Authorities searched the train for an hour, 40mins and found a suspicious looking package in a locked equipment cabinet. One report said the package was shaped like a bomb. Whoever placed it there needed a key to do so. After it was removed, the train 627 equipment moved on to Philadelphia.

More changes to Amtrak service, from the Nov 10 timetable: The **Crescent** will leave NY an hour later than before. **The Capitol Ltd** will leave Chicago an hour later than before. The **Lake Shore Ltd** will leave Chicago 2hrs later than before. Train 303 will depart Chicago one hour earlier. Greenfield Village is added as a stop for trains 350 & 355. The Tucson-Phoenix bus will no longer serve Tempe AZ. A new Thruway bus will run Laredo-San Antonio, connecting with most of the San Antonio trains. A similar new bus will run Atlanta-Macon GA, connecting to the **Crescent**. A new bus service Melbourne-Cocoa Beach-Orlando connects to trains 97 & 98 in Orlando.

When **NARP President** Jack Martin met with Amtrak Intercity officials in Chicago Aug 30 (see also p. 16), he attempted to get information that would help with the hit-list trains, still scheduled for discontinuance. But he reported, "Far too many of Amtrak's answers were vague and non-responsive... No one from Amtrak volunteered anything. Answers to specific questions were frequently vague—uninformative except in the most general ways." He complained that "It was the first time in many years I have encountered an obvious 'we vs. them' attitude from Amtrak management toward NARP."

RTN's undercover agents have provided us with a copy of Martin's letter to Intercity. Martin said that he suggested using the equipment from the **Lake Shore's** Boston section for that same evening's **Night Owl** to cut costs, but Amtrak's response was "completely negative." He wrote Amtrak that "You stated that the Boston section makes a positive financial contribution to the system. That is not surprising. Using the equipment for the **Night Owl** should improve the contribution. That should be reason enough to continue the service. To discontinue the Boston section because it represents slight departure from the standard consist approach hardly seems reason to justify surrendering that revenue and that market... Yet the response during the meeting was to list all the reasons why it could not be done—reasons that I did not find persuasive. They did persuade me that Amtrak was not willing to deviate from what has been decided—no matter the merits."

Regarding the **Texas Eagle**, an Amtrak Intercity official "insisted the load factor on the three-coach train this year was worse than the load factor on the five-coach train of last year. He gave no specific figures. I cannot respond in a vacuum. Load factor can be the product of many things. However, the impact on the load factor of a three-coach train from the inevitably lighter loads on the west end could be much greater than the impact on a five-coach train. I find it hard to believe a market could have changed that drastically in a year, absent significant factors that I do not know. If there were Amtrak-induced factors similar to those that led to the drops in ridership and revenues on the **Crescent** then I can understand the declines. [His] assertion is inconsistent with information we received from employees who tried to obtain space on the **Eagle** and repeatedly encountered sold-out trains this summer. Employees who tried to put passengers on the train despite the sold-out status were admonished against doing that.

"I understand that product line management for the **Eagle** requested additional coaches before summer began. This is consistent with SOT information run in April that showed the train sold out or nearly sold out on most trips in June and July, and many August trips, 50-110 days before the trips originated. In late April, some August trips already had over 260 booked at various points (Train 21 originating Aug 2 had 274 at Little Rock; Aug 6 (a Tuesday) 282 at Little Rock and Texarkana; Aug 9, 268 leaving St. Louis. Capacity was approximately 290 if every bed was used. The request for additional coaches obviously was denied.

"How many times must people be told there is no space before they stop calling? Where were the two additional coaches? Was this a conscious decision to starve the train before it was discontinued? I do not attribute such a motive to you, *but over the years we have learned there are many separate agendas within Amtrak* [italics added]..."

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Discussing the idea of standard-consist operation, Martin told Amtrak Intercity that it has merit. But, "In answering my inquiry about additional cars being used for sold-out or extreme-ly high advance demand situations, you painted a bleak response. In essence you said those situations would be addressed by yield management, not by increasing capacity. I have not changed my view that Amtrak's future likes in moving ever greater numbers of passengers at reasonable fares—becoming an increasingly greater factor in the transportation mix in this country. Reasonable fares can improve yields. However, Amtrak's future does not lie in extracting the maximum revenue from every passenger, thereby minimizing the number of passengers and in essence becoming the high-fare carrier. It will not survive if it carves an increasingly smaller niche in the transportation mix. NARP will, and it must, oppose that approach in every way available to us."

From the Chicago meeting, the NARP President said it was clear that "the differences facing us are much greater than I had imagined." He continued, "I believe I understand the enormity of the challenges that you face, and I know some tough choices have to be made. However, we cannot accept the changes simply because someone has said they are the right choices, particularly when it is obvious that other choices have not been considered and when data appear either to have been misrepresented, misinterpreted or completely misunderstood. Obviously we cannot accept changes when data are being withheld. 'Trust me' from your folks is simply not enough in this situation!

"If we are to be stonewalled regarding meaningful information, and the Intercity Business Unit refuses to look at alternatives before the doomed trains have been eliminated, then we have no choice but to take our concerns to Washington..."

After the letter to Intercity, plus phone calls, Intercity agreed to overnight mail a pack of data to NARP.

NARP said that Amtrak has assured them that the policy of placing on-board crew in Superliner sleeper revenue space will soon end, but it may continue on the **Pioneer** between Chicago and Denver, where when combined with the **Desert Wind** or **CZ**, more crew members than dorm space can handle are present. NARP had complained to Amtrak about this practice on sold-out trains, which would edge out potential paying customers.

NARP also complained to Amtrak about occasions when more than 80 seats on the **Cardinal** between Huntington and White Sulphur Springs WV had been blocked out for tour groups, though Amtrak's policy is to limit that amount to 40. Blocking out too many reduces the space for lucrative long-distance passengers. Amtrak told NARP it would investigate.

As predicted in RTN in late 1995, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is being sold by owner Charles Bradshaw, for a reported $20 million. He bought the line from D&RGW in 1981 for about $2 million. New owner will be Ray Monteleone, head of First American Railways, Inc., of Hollywood FL. The deal will be finalized in January.

Also, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is being taken over by George Bartholomew of the Cape Cod Railroad. The deal was approved Nov 4 by the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission, meeting in Santa Fe NM. The road is owned jointly by Colorado and New Mexico, and its operation is contracted out. The railroad sees an estimated 50,000 riders per year—many more than the old **San Juan Express**, the regular narrow gauge train Alamosa-Durango that was abandoned in the late 1940s; it also had an overnight connection Alamosa-Denver. The Durango & Silverton has about 200,000 boardings per year in Durango.

Amtrak in September announced the formation of a non-profit organization to facilitate the renovation of U.S. railroad stations. It is called the Great American Station Foundation. Amtrak contributed $2 million in seed money to the organization, whose board is composed of Amtrak President Tom Downs and officials of International Downtown Ass'n, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Disney Consumer Products, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the firm of Oppenheimer, Wolff & Donnelly, and the mayor of Meridian MS.

The Arkansas ARP reported the following: "On Oct 21 Amtrak announced a special promotion of a 2 for 1 fare package, available only on the "hit list" trains and the **California Zephyr** (the reason behind inclusion of the **Zephyr** but not the **Sunset** is unknown; both trains carry through cars of "hit list" trains as an integral part of their consist). Numerous obvious errors of fares have been reported, necessitating repeat advertising at additional expense. These ads were produced as camera-ready copy by Amtrak's ad agency, so typographical errors on the part of local newspapers should not have been a factor.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

In RTN 555, Duane Roller ascribes the "contorted and discriminatory" customs procedures on US-Canadian trains to loss of institutional memory at the inception of Amtrak, implying that the current abominable situation began with introduction of the **Montrealer** in 1972 [exact date of introduction of the **Montrealer/Washingtonian** was Sep 29, 1972; see RTN 44].

This is not correct. Throughout the 1970s the **Adirondack** and **Pacific International** operated with the sensible and traditional method of boarding customs officers of the destination country at the last stop in the nation of origin. The officers then performed their work en route, allowing them to debark at the first station in their country. I never rode the **Montrealer**, but I did ride the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo (CP) Budd RDC from Buffalo to Toronto in 1977, and I recall that the traditional procedure was followed. I believe that it was not until after Amtrak was forced to discontinue the **Pacific International** in 1979 that the respective customs services imposed stop-the-train-and-wait procedures for the **Adirondack** and **Montrealer**, and later the **Maple Leaf**. In this process, the train stops at the border, customs officers board the train, do all necessary work while the train waits, and leave the train before it is allowed to continue. (I am not informed as to procedures on the Chicago-Toronto **International**.

This is silly enough, but the procedure that Roller describes in Vancouver is a mind-boggling absurdity, although it might result in fewer train delays while customs officers take their own sweet time under the stop-and-wait process.

I do not have timetables at hand to check details, but it is reasonable to speculate that in the past some of the near-border stops were made primarily for this purpose of exchanging customs officials. Taxis or government autos were probably usually used to ferry the officers across the border, so the discontinuance of the method likely does save the customs services some money, at the expense of passenger convenience and our strained faith in rationality.

Ben English
NY State, by E-mail.

Although the cover date of this issue of RTN is October 31, the issue contains news updated through November 10.

Coming next issue: All about the NAPA VALLEY WINE TRAIN.

RAIL FANTRIPS

EXCURSION OF THE MONTH

Jul 1-Aug 1, 1997: Second steam-hauled tour across the Trans-Siberian from Vladivostok to Moscow, continuing to St. Petersburg and Helsinki. The steam trip of a lifetime. GW Travel Ltd's record-breaking four-week tour in 1996 covered almost 8000 miles with 72 different steam locomotives (see RTN 552). All GWT tours feature: Extensive tourist program along the route, with local guides; hotel on wheels; overnight hotel stops in larger cities; doctor; European chief, musicians and security guards on all trains; private saloon cars (available at extra cost); shower car included in all trains; experienced Russian staff. For full details contact GW Travel Limited, 6 Old Market Place, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 4NP, England. Phone 0161 928 9410. FAX: 0161 941 6101.

Dec 1: Christmas in Mid-America. Bus excursion to an historic town for choral concert, annual event. Later, old fashioned town Christmas, and traditional dinner. Lv 12:20pm, back 8pm. $39. Real American Experiences, Inc., 4341 Holly Hills Blvd, St Louis MO 63116. 314-752-3148.

Dec 7: Annual holiday visit to Governor's mansion, Jefferson City MO. Bus excursion lvs from the Venture on South Kingshighway at noon. Tour capitol & state museum, full course dinner, visit with Governor. Back 9:30pm. Real American Experiences, Inc. See address above.

Dec 7 & Dec 14: The Santa Claus Train. 45min roundtrip Dillwyn-Alpha VA. Five trips ea day. Fare $6. Lv from Buckingham Branch RR Sta., Hwy US 15, Dillwyn (in center of town). Old Dominion Chapter, NRHS, Box 8583, Richmond VA 23226. Phone eves 800-451-6318 Sun-Thur.

Feb 9, 1997: Railroad Hobby Show—Rail-A-Rama XXIII at the Ramada Rolling Green, 311 Lowell St (exit 43 off Rte 93) just south of Rte 495, Andover MA. $3, child $1. Many aspects of railroading hobby. Mystic Valley Rwy Society, PO Box 486, Hyde Park MA 02136. 361-4445.

Feb 15-23, 1997: Special winter excursion, New Orleans Express via Amtrak's NEDirect & Crescent Boston-New Orleans for week of enjoyment. $1200 & up. Accommodations, transfers, tours & many meals included. Mystic Valley Railway Society, see address above.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Excursion of the Month appears once a month, in alternate issues. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709, or E-mail to rtnews1@ix.netcom.com

CARS & CONSISTS

*Alaska Railroad southbd express psgr train, Fairbanks, Aug 23: engines 3008 & 3011; cars 210 coach, 401 diner, 501 dome coach, 206 coach, (Westours cars:) WTMC "Matanuska", "Tanana", "Kashwitna", "Kobuk", "Eklutna", "Knick", (Princess cars:) Amtrak 800150, no. unknown, Amtrak 800598.

*Alaska RR Seward psgr train, Anchorage, Aug 29: engine 3009; cars 208 coach, 301 diner, 305 coach.

*Alaska RR train 4 (Hurricane Gulch local), Anchorage Aug 29: RDC 712.

*White Pass & Yukon train 31, Skagway RR Dock, Sep 3: engines 93 & 100; cars 201 "Lake Crater", 205 "Lake Chilkat", 224 "Lake Marsh", 222 "Lake Lindeman", 226 "Lake Fraser". With engines run around and train reversed, it became train 32 at White Pass. —Duane Roller.

***Southwest Chief**, train 3, Chicago Oct 27: engines 828 (AMD-103), 377 & 407 (F40s); cars 1560, 1408, 1436, 1530, 1524, 1565 & 1503 MHCs, 1257 baggage, Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39018, Superliners 32000* & 32001 slprs, 38021* diner, 33000* lounge, 34002* & 34071 coaches, Hi-level coach-dorm 39007. Note that this train carried the first and second Superliner sleepers ever built and the first Superliner lounge car built.

***California Zephyr**, train 5, Chicago Oct 27: engines 836 (AMD-103) & 304 (F40); cars 1402, 1471 & 1514 MHCs, baggage 1225, Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39004, Superliners 32054*, 32059* & 32021* slprs, diner 38025, lounge 33007*, coaches 34045*, 34098* & 34005, slprs 32058 & 32020*, Superliner II diner 38059, Superliners 34067* coach & 31023* coach-baggage.

***Texas Eagle**, train 21, Chicago Oct 27: engines 512 (P-32) & 349 (F40); cars 1002 & 1717 baggage, Horizon coaches 54573, 54530 & 54566, Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39007, Superliners 32043* & 32041 slprs, 31008 coach-baggage, 34097 coach, Superliner IIs 38039 diner & 33048 lounge, Superliner coach 34024*.

***Empire Builder**, train 8, Chicago Oct 27: engines 358 & 318 (F40s); cars 1186 baggage, Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39041, Superliners 32031* & 32025* slprs, Superliner II coach 34132, Superliner coach 34053*, Superliner II diner 38068, Superliners 33013* lounge, 34032 coach, 31020* coach-baggage, 32065* sleeper, Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39032, MHCs 1446, 1561, 1523 & 1527. —George Danchisen.

***Crescent**, train 19, Newark NJ Oct 25: engine 601 (D-60); cars 1400 MHC, 1255 baggage, 2892 "Pacific Command" slpr used as crew dorm, Viewliner slprs 620?? "Palm View" & 620?? "Moonlight View", diner 8501 "Silver Tureen", lounge 28004, coaches 25077, 25016, 25019 & 25000, MHC 1529.

***Silver Meteor**, train 97, Newark NJ Oct 25: engines 912 & 919 (AEM-7s); cars 1472 MHC, 1006 baggage, 2467 "Silver Prairie" slpr for crew dorm, 2996 "Pine Lodge" slpr, Viewliner sleepers 62021 "Morning View" & 62001 "Atlantic View", 11-bdrom slpr 2232, diner 8510 "Silver Café", lounge 28002, coaches 25073, 25083, 25063, 25071 & 25024. —Jim Langan.

***Auto Train**, train 52, Sanford FL Sep 19: engines 820 & 829 (AMD-103s); cars Superliner IIs 39000 transition dorm-slpr, sleepers 32503 "Philip Randolph", 32089 "Massachusetts", 32114 "Virginia", 32505 "Palm Springs", 32504 "Palm Harbor", 32100 "New York", coaches 34125, 34128, 34119, 34118, 34124, diners 38041, 38054 & 38051, lounges 33033 & 33034, 24 car carriers; total of 43 cars, approx. 190 psgrs, 98 vehicles. —Russell Henry.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Here's a Republican principle I would think these guys could understand: You've gotta spend money to make money.

"How about adding about, oh, 50 NEW trains? How about spending some money on upgrading the track so the trains can go faster?

"How about turning the train stations into places like airports, where you can just head down there and GO SOMEWHERE, instead of calling up and asking 'em for the earliest MONTH when a train might come through?

"You can't keep saying, 'Well, we're not making much money on this line, so we'll run fewer trains, and we'll cut out some cities, and maybe MORE PEOPLE will ride.

"In other words, you can't 'downsize' a railroad. If the train don't go nowhere, nobody be getting on the train."

—Syndicated columnist Joe Bob Briggs, Oct.

"Entertainments may be taxed; public houses may be taxed; racehorses may be taxed; the possession of armorial bearings and manservants may be taxed—and the yield devoted to the general revenue. But motorists are to be privileged for all time to have the whole yield of the tax on motors devoted to roads. Obviously this is all nonsense...Such contentions are absurd, and constitute at once an outrage upon the sovereignty of Parliament and upon common sense."

—Winston Churchill in 1926, quoted in *Getting There: The Epic Struggle Between Roads and Rail in the American Century* by Stephen B. Goddard.

A Fall Foliage Trio

By John J. Harmon

My wife had recently been expressing a desire for viewing some fall foliage in New England. I was reluctant to make the long drive from New Jersey, especially at a time when the roads would likely be jammed with what the locals call "Leaf Peepers".

But Amtrak's VERMONTER, instituted about a year ago after the demise of the MONTREALER, provided an opportunity. Together with two friends, we could travel up to White River Junction, rent a car and drive to Lincoln, New Hampshire, where a local resort hotel would serve as a base of operations. The Conway Scenic Railroad is about an hour away over a scenic highway, and their 5.5-hour trip over the newly reopened line to Fabyans would provide excellent opportunities for foliage viewing. Finally, the Hobo Railroad in Lincoln would cap off the day with fine dining under glass.

So, on a Tuesday morning in October, the four of us present ourselves on the platform at Trenton just before the scheduled 8:38am departure of the VERMONTER. The train pulls in right on time, consisting of the distinctive VERMONTER baggage car, four coaches, and a café car. We are fortunate enough to find four forward-facing seats in the front car (half the seats in each car face the rear, as the train reverses direction a few miles beyond Springfield). The

café car provides coffee for all, and we begin the 8-hour journey to White River Junction.

The electric engine comes off at New Haven, to be replaced by a diesel on the rear which will push us as far as Palmer, Massachusetts. This provides the opportunity to stand at the front of the train and have an engineer's eye view of the track ahead.

The weather is cloudy, but we hope to stay well ahead of the remnants of Tropical Storm Josephine, which is currently pushing its way up the East Coast. Leaves are just beginning to turn in New Jersey, but as we head northward through Connecticut, the changing of the seasons becomes more and more evident.

A trip to the café car for lunch brings a welcome surprise. The standard café car menu has been augmented on this train by two VERMONTER specials. One is a gourmet box lunch consisting of a choice of a roast beef or turkey hoagie, tortilla chips and dessert, plus a free soft drink. The other is a pasta salad. I go for the box lunch, and find that the tortilla chips are packaged in Vermont, and the dessert is cheesecake made in Vermont. It is all quite nice.

We arrive in Springfield nearly on time, and are just about ready for an on-time departure, when the Conrail dispatcher does what comes naturally. An eastbound freight has been standing on the main line adjacent to the depot, and of course he gets the go-ahead to proceed east on our time. This means our departure is delayed about ten minutes, and we creep at restricted speed for several miles until he gets far enough ahead of us. As we pull into Palmer, where we change direction in order to head north on the New England Central, the conductor announces that we are running about 30 minutes late. Thanks, Conrail, for nothing.

From Brattleboro, in southern Vermont, I am on new track as far as daylight is concerned. I've been over this route several times on the MONTREALER, but it was always in the wee hours between Brattleboro and White River Junction. I'd covered the line south of Brattleboro in daylight about 30 years ago when the Central of Vermont ran a steam special from New London.

The scenic highlights of this portion of the line are two crossings of the Connecticut River, at Bellows Falls and Windsor, as well as passing through some typical New England villages.

Our arrival in White River Junction is about 30 minutes late, and I leave the three women in the waiting room with the luggage while I take a taxi out to the airport at Lebanon (3 miles, $5) to pick up a rental car. I pick them up within a half an hour, and we are on our way for the 80-mile drive to Lincoln, still keeping ahead of the rain.

On Wednesday we have an appointment at 10am with the Conway Scenic Railroad to pick up our reserved tickets for the 11am departure to Fabyans. It rained hard during the night, and it is still cloudy this morning, but the forecast is for no more rain and brightening skies later.

Things are pretty hectic at the North Conway depot from 10:00 to 10:30 in the morning. People are lined up at one window buying tickets for the regular 10:30 steam train departure on the Valley line to Conway. Meanwhile a separate window serves those who are picking up tickets for the "Notch Train", as the service to Fabyans is called. In addition, a long line circles through the small waiting room, consisting of women queuing up for the ladies' room, and all this creates near-gridlock conditions.

I pick up the four tickets for our group, along with four more tickets for an optional box lunch. The agent tells me to go outside, and get in another line to pick up the box lunches.

The steam train departs southward toward Conway, and our train immediately backs into the station and is ready for boarding. We have assigned seats in the first class car, and have been told boarding will be by name. The first class car is a former Canadian National coach which most recently saw service on the Montreal - Deux Montagnes suburban service. It has high-backed individual cushioned seats with leg rests. Despite the appellation "first class", this is still a high occupancy coach, containing 68 revenue seats. One end of the car contains a small snack bar area that serves the entire train.

The car is being formally dedicated today, and is named the "Carroll P. Reed". A small ceremony takes place on the station platform, and 24 seats have been set aside for his family.

We are assigned to four seats in the middle of the car on the left hand side. An announcement is made that all passengers are expected to change sides for the return trip so that both sides of the line may be viewed by all.

We depart on time with over 300 passengers, and the first mile is on the north end of a former Boston & Maine line which came up from Boston via Dover and Rochester. The line ends at the junction with the former Maine Central's Mountain Division, which has been out of service since 1982. This line was part of a line which ran between Portland and St. Johnsbury. It ran through an area known for fancy tourist hotels at the turn of the century at Crawfords Notch and Fabyans. More recently, ski resorts were established at places such as Intervale and Bartlett.

The line is currently owned by the State of New Hampshire, and the Conway Scenic, with the help of state funding, has gradually opened up the line over the past couple of years. The last portion from Crawfords to Fabyans was reopened on September 1, 1996.

An announcer calls out the many points of interest over the loudspeaker system. The most spectacular portion is the ten miles from Notchlands to Crawford Notch, where the line hugs the side of a mountain on a steep grade, and passes over the curved Frankenstein Trestle and Willy Branch Bridge. The latter can be viewed from the parallel Route 302 far below the rail line.

The Conway Scenic "Notch Train" makes a stop at the station at Crawford's NH. The former Maine Central station is now a museum and rest stop operated by the Appalachian Mountain Club. Photos by the author.

The Appalachian Trail is crossed en route, and several hikers are seen in the area.

A 15-minute stop is made at Crawfords, where there is a gift shop and museum operated by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the attractive former depot.

The four miles to Fabyans is mostly downhill, and the scenic highlight is the Mt. Washington House, a turn of the century resort hotel perched on the side of a hill on the opposite side of the valley, and which is still open during the summer season.

The station at Fabyans has been converted to a restaurant. It is strategically located at the point where a road has replaced the former B&M branch line to Base Station, the base of operations for the Mt. Washington Cog Railway. Regular operations of the Conway Scenic end at Fabyans, although the line is intact another 15 miles to Whitefield, and the railroad can use the line to get equipment in and out if necessary. A railroad spokesman said there are no current plans to extend the tourist operation beyond Fabyans. This is truly a remarkable line, and a chance to observe mountain railroading at its best.

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The third part of our three-day excursion was the dinner train on the Hobo Railroad, based in Lincoln. I had stumbled on this operation three or four years ago, and found it to be one of the better dinner trains in the entire country.

In making our reservations, I had opted for an upgrade to dome class for an extra $5, which turned out to be just as well, as there were just twelve diners on the upper level. A bus group took up most of the places on the lower level.

We are seated about a half hour before our scheduled 7pm departure. The car appears to be a former B&O dome, and has a spotlight on each side of the car at both the front and rear to enhance nighttime viewing. A waitress takes our cocktail order, and we sit back and enjoy our surroundings while the railroad does some shunting before departure time.

While we are sipping our cocktails, the waitress returns and offers a choice of three appetizers. The choices are a paté, a tuna steak or a cream of broccoli soup. This will be followed by a salad served with a vinaigrette dressing, and an intermezzo. There are also three choices for the main course--a filet of sole, stuffed breast of chicken or pork tenderloin.

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café car provides coffee for all, and we begin the 8-hour journey to White River Junction.

The electric engine comes off at New Haven, to be replaced by a diesel on the rear which will push us as far as Palmer, Massachusetts. This provides the opportunity to stand at the front of the train and have an engineer's eye view of the track ahead.

The weather is cloudy, but we hope to stay well ahead of the remnants of Tropical Storm Josephine, which is currently pushing its way up the East Coast. Leaves are just beginning to turn in New Jersey, but as we head northward through Connecticut, the changing of the seasons becomes more and more evident.

A trip to the café car for lunch brings a welcome surprise. The standard café car menu has been augmented on this train by two VERMONTER specials. One is a gourmet box lunch consisting of a choice of a roast beef or turkey hoagie, tortilla chips and dessert, plus a free soft drink. The other is a pasta salad. I go for the box lunch, and find that the tortilla chips are packaged in Vermont, and the dessert is cheesecake made in Vermont. It is all quite nice.

We arrive in Springfield nearly on time, and are just about ready for an on-time departure, when the Conrail dispatcher does what comes naturally. An eastbound freight has been standing on the main line adjacent to the depot, and of course he gets the go-ahead to proceed east on our time. This means our departure is delayed about ten minutes, and we creep at restricted speed for several miles until he gets far enough ahead of us. As we pull into Palmer, where we change direction in order to head north on the New England Central, the conductor announces that we are running about 30 minutes late. Thanks, Conrail, for nothing.

From Brattleboro, in southern Vermont, I am on new track as far as daylight is concerned. I've been over this route several times on the MONTREALER, but it was always in the wee hours between Brattleboro and White River Junction. I'd covered the line south of Brattleboro in daylight about 30 years ago when the Central of Vermont ran a steam special from New London.

The scenic highlights of this portion of the line are two crossings of the Connecticut River, at Bellows Falls and Windsor, as well as passing through some typical New England villages.

Our arrival in White River Junction is about 30 minutes late, and I leave the three women in the waiting room with the luggage while I take a taxi out to the airport at Lebanon (3 miles, $5) to pick up a rental car. I pick them up within a half an hour, and we are on our way for the 80-mile drive to Lincoln, still keeping ahead of the rain.

On Wednesday we have an appointment at 10am with the Conway Scenic Railroad to pick up our reserved tickets for the 11am departure to Fabyans. It rained hard during the night, and it is still cloudy this morning, but the forecast is for no more rain and brightening skies later.

Things are pretty hectic at the North Conway depot from 10:00 to 10:30 in the morning. People are lined up at one window buying tickets for the regular 10:30 steam train departure on the Valley line to Conway. Meanwhile a separate window serves those who are picking up tickets for the "Notch Train", as the service to Fabyans is called. In addition, a long line circles through the small waiting room, consisting of women queuing up for the ladies' room, and all this creates near-gridlock conditions.

I pick up the four tickets for our group, along with four more tickets for an optional box lunch. The agent tells me to go outside, and get in another line to pick up the box lunches.

The steam train departs southward toward Conway, and our train immediately backs into the station and is ready for boarding. We have assigned seats in the first class car, and have been told boarding will be by name. The first class car is a former Canadian National coach which most recently saw service on the Montreal - Deux Montagnes suburban service. It has high-backed individual cushioned seats with leg rests. Despite the appellation "first class", this is still a high occupancy coach, containing 68 revenue seats. One end of the car contains a small snack bar area that serves the entire train.

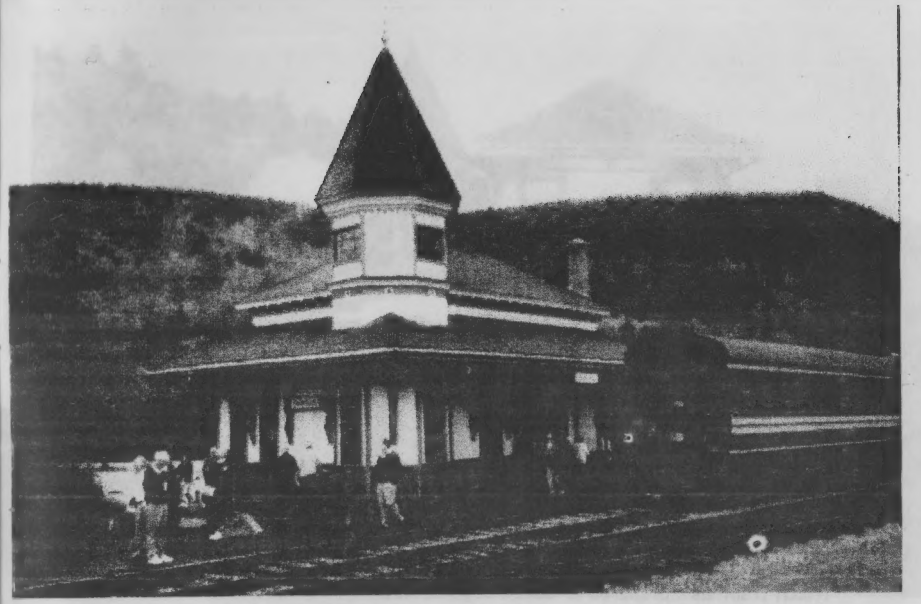
The car is being formally dedicated today, and is named the "Carroll P. Reed". A small ceremony takes place on the station platform, and 24 seats have been set aside for his family.

We are assigned to four seats in the middle of the car on the left hand side. An announcement is made that all passengers are expected to change sides for the return trip so that both sides of the line may be viewed by all.

We depart on time with over 300 passengers, and the first mile is on the north end of a former Boston & Maine line which came up from Boston via Dover and Rochester. The line ends at the junction with the former Maine Central's Mountain Division, which has been out of service since 1982. This line was part of a line which ran between Portland and St. Johnsbury. It ran through an area known for fancy tourist hotels at the turn of the century at Crawfords Notch and Fabyans. More recently, ski resorts were established at places such as Intervale and Bartlett.

The line is currently owned by the State of New Hampshire, and the Conway Scenic, with the help of state funding, has gradually opened up the line over the past couple of years. The last portion from Crawfords to Fabyans was reopened on September 1, 1996.

An announcer calls out the many points of interest over the loudspeaker system. The most spectacular portion is the ten miles from Notchlands to Crawford Notch, where the line hugs the side of a mountain on a steep grade, and passes over the curved Frankenstein Trestle and Willy Branch Bridge. The latter can be viewed from the parallel Route 302 far below the rail line.



The Conway Scenic "Notch Train" makes a stop at the station at Crawford's NH. The former Maine Central station is now a museum and rest stop operated by the Appalachian Mountain Club. Photos by the author.

The Appalachian Trail is crossed en route, and several hikers are seen in the area.

A 15-minute stop is made at Crawfords, where there is a gift shop and museum operated by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the attractive former depot.

The four miles to Fabyans is mostly downhill, and the scenic highlight is the Mt. Washington House, a turn of the century resort hotel perched on the side of a hill on the opposite side of the valley, and which is still open during the summer season.

The station at Fabyans has been converted to a restaurant. It is strategically located at the point where a road has replaced the former B&M branch line to Base Station, the base of operations for the Mt. Washington Cog Railway. Regular operations of the Conway Scenic end at Fabyans, although the line is intact another 15 miles to Whitefield, and the railroad can use the line to get equipment in and out if necessary. A railroad spokesman said there are no current plans to extend the tourist operation beyond Fabyans. This is truly a remarkable line, and a chance to observe mountain railroading at its best.

●●●

The third part of our three-day excursion was the dinner train on the Hobo Railroad, based in Lincoln. I had stumbled on this operation three or four years ago, and found it to be one of the better dinner trains in the entire country.

In making our reservations, I had opted for an upgrade to dome class for an extra $5, which turned out to be just as well, as there were just twelve diners on the upper level. A bus group took up most of the places on the lower level.

We are seated about a half hour before our scheduled 7pm departure. The car appears to be a former B&O dome, and has a spotlight on each side of the car at both the front and rear to enhance nighttime viewing. A waitress takes our cocktail order, and we sit back and enjoy our surroundings while the railroad does some shunting before departure time.

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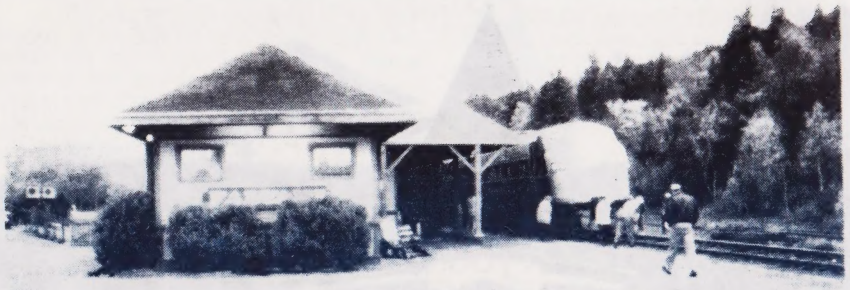

Author John Harmon photographed the Conway Scenic "Notch Train" as it prepared to leave Fabyans, New Hampshire. The former Maine Central station here now functions as a restaurant.

FRONT COVER PHOTO:

On October 12, one of NJ Transit's four Saturday Hoboken to Port Jervis NY trains, with locomotive 4130, meets the High Iron Enterprises' steam-powered special train at the Port Jervis passenger station. For further details of this rail excursion, see East Coast Report in this issue. Photo by Bruce J. Russell.

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